



September 26, 2023

The Honorable Tracy Stone-Manning
Director, Bureau of Land Management
1849 C Street, NW
Room 5646
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Stone-Manning,

On August 17, 2023, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Rock Springs Field Office (RSFO) announced their Draft Resource Management Plan Revision (RMP) and accompanying Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the 3.6 million acre RSFO planning area. We believe this draft does not represent the Agency's best effort and also want to acknowledge that this RMP has been a challenging enterprise. Over the course of many years there have been several different "Preferred Alternatives" offered which for one reason or another have never seen the full public light of day. It is our considered opinion that the Bureau of Land Management should withdraw this draft, reconsider the alternatives making use of the considerable stakeholder and public comment over a number of years, and issue a fully supported and considered preferred alternative. It is Wyoming's intent to make sure that this RMP stands up to careful public and legal scrutiny. Issuing a thought through draft preferred alternative rather than "building the plane as we try to fly it" may actually result in something that could fly. What is before us to consider will not. As this draft stands it will lack Wyoming's support, local community support, and will surely be challenged on rigor.

More to the point, this draft does not accurately reflect the 12-year cooperative process undertaken during my entire time in office as Governor and as State Treasurer, three presidential administrations, a multitude of public meetings, cooperating agency input, technological and scientific advancements, and millions of taxpayer dollars. So, it is completely incomprehensible that the BLM selected for its Agency Preferred Alternative, Alternative B, one considered an outlier in previous attempts at issuing an RMP one that was meant to serve initially as a bookend – an alternative with the most resource use restrictions and concomitantly with the largest socioeconomic impacts. Over a decade's worth of contributions from local stakeholders, cooperators, counties, and state agencies are either falling on deaf ears or disingenuously being thrown by the wayside with this decision.

Substituting Alternative B and summarily disregarding Alternative D, the "approach allow[ing] for opportunities to use and develop resources within the planning area while promoting environmental conservation" is a bait-and-switch pulled on the people of Wyoming. The focus of technical and substantive comments that would inform and improve a more practical and palatable alternative have instead been repurposed presumably to assuage the blow selecting Alternative B wrecks on southwestern Wyoming. Local communities clearly cannot support such a heavy handed, poorly considered, improperly

supported, tone deaf approach to crafting a document intended to direct management over such a large and important area.

Until very recently, the BLM has been a major partner, along with state and local entities, in bringing about consensus-based Wyoming solutions to major land management questions. Wyoming is a national leader on Greater Sage Grouse, migration corridor management, and responsible development. We did that with local support, stakeholder buy-in, and rigorous on the ground work. That work was not simple or easy, but it showed a respect for the resources and the people of the area. The BLM's RMP and Preferred Alternative threaten to eliminate all the hard work accomplished by bulldozing over state executive orders, stakeholder engagement, and interagency agreements. Simply put, existing and future partnerships are in jeopardy. A federal fiat won't run efficiently or well over such a bumpy road.

There is a substantial amount of trust placed in our federal government to manage our public lands effectively and according to law. That trust is fragile and should never be abused. One of the BLM's Guiding Principles is, "To cultivate community-based conservation, citizen-centered stewardship, and partnership through consultation, cooperation, and communication." The Agency's actions here are contrary to that intent. One is left to assume that that partnership was found to be less valuable than playing to some other audience than those most affected by the people and the ecology these decisions would most impact. It is a shame that evidently little heed was paid to the wishes of local communities. The release of this draft is the first instance the public has to review the BLM's proposal, and it has completely blindsided those involved, those who care most about the place. The release of this draft places a 90-day burden on the shoulders of those who live, work, and recreate here to understand and respond to this outlandish Preferred Alternative. The trust that has so painstakingly been earned over years of cooperation has been tested severely.

I request that this hastily constructed hamfisted draft, as written and including the insincere and impractical choice of Alternative B as the Agency's Preferred Alternative, be completely withdrawn and resubmitted to the public with a newly crafted Preferred Alternative using the years of work by the local field office and cooperators. A realistic and constructive conversation and public input process can occur with a pragmatic Alternative. Please respond to this request no later than October 17, 2023.

Sincerely,



Mark Gordon
Governor

MG:rl:kh